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Primary school education Standards for student's assessment in primary school

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Abstract

Specialization and improvement of educational work in schools is one of the most important areas in the pedagogical-psychological science. Activities in this area are intensive and they are developing in two ways.

- First, they are going in a way of optimal increase of educational activity of the students.
- Second, in a way of finding motivational strength that student should have for gaining knowledge.

Assessment is a process of gaining and interpreting information about student's knowledge and achievements. It is used 1) to inform the students and their parents about their improvement in gaining knowledge, skills and attitudes, 2) to help the teachers to modify their classes and 3) to inform the other subjects that make decisions concerning education about assessments they have made.

Some standards are given in order to contribute to raising the quality and assessment of students in primary schools. Standards are descriptions of the needed level of quality according to which we can assess practice, without giving precise grades for the requirements fulfilment degree. They follow the students' education and their accomplishment in the classes and give ways for methods to achieve higher quality in the student's assessment process.

Standards should be followed by some principles that will be given in this paper. They are represented through some steps, such as assessment planning, assessment methods, implementation of assessment process, forming grades and information about assessment realization.

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1. Introduction

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Every healthy environment is based on a healthy educational system or, more specifically, on healthy educated teachers who educate themselves all their lives; they do that now and will do it in future. In order to have a healthy society or state, we should have as many educated people as we can, intellectuals who will contribute with their minds to the development of their society thus increasing the power of the state. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia works under a very true motto ‘Knowledge is force, knowledge is power’, the more we know, the stronger we are, powerful and capable to build a better country and future for next generations. Everything is based on education, on the educational process itself, and that is why our goal is to pay greater attention to the education in our country and to find the real way to produce healthy intellectuals. The problem can be solved only if we start from the very root and then we can reach the top, so we should start with the reforms in the primary education. First, we should start with perceiving of the bearers of educational system so we can analyse and implement the reforms, and then we will start with their own analysis. As we already know, bearers of the educational system in primary education are the schools, principals, teachers and students themselves. Because of the extensiveness of the problem, we will try to focus on a small, but very important segment of the problems, which we consider of essential significance for producing healthy intellectuals in one’s country. That is why we devote our paper on the most important part of the educational system, and that is students’ assessment in Primary education.

We decided to deal with assessment in primary education because there are the beginnings of creating intellectuals who are the future leaders in one country. In primary schools bearers of the educational system are the teachers who are directly connected with the students. We associate the term school with the process of learning, and the final goal is to gain the necessary knowledge for obtaining power and healthy intellectuals who will raise the intellectual level in the country. When we speak about students’ learning, we should take into consideration assessment as a measure of the gained knowledge. In the last few years, assessment and the methods of assessment are very present in our country, which is trying to promote the current system of the school assessment in order to improve teaching and learning and to contribute to the optimal progress of each student. It is common knowledge that for years back the students study just to get higher grade and not to gain the necessary knowledge; being totally wrong, this inspires us to analyse the whole educational process and try to detect the problems which lead to this. It is obvious that students learn only for grades which they need to enrol in secondary school, to get what they want from their parents, or to show their status. No one studies anymore for knowledge itself which will help him/her in future life. After receiving this kind of results from the research made in several primary schools, the need for different assessment and for finding the consequences of inappropriate assessment are growing every day. Grades are noticed to contain some unjustified elements such as: indiscipline, disobedience, irregular presence, not bringing writing utensils, not having homework and etc, which have an impact on lowering of the grade, and those like obedience, activity, regular presence, diligence, influence of the parent etc., which have an impact on increasing the grade. Assessment should be a component of the educational process, not something separated from it. That is why change is necessary in the methods of assessment, introduction of assessment standards that should be respected by all schools and teachers. A very important constitutive part of the changing concept in primary education is the development of contemporary assessment and advance which will take into consideration the characteristics and the quality of students’ knowledge. In order to provide better quality in primary education we should first determine the principles under which it will be based.

Principles:

1. Assessment, above all, is created to improve the knowledge and achievements of the students;
2. Assessment provides complete information about students’ achievements;
3. Assessment is a component of the educational process, learning and teaching;
4. Assessment is based on using different methods;
5. Assessment is a continuous process;
6. Assessment is fair;
7. Assessment is transparent;
8. Assessment is valid and reliable.

Standards are structured to follow the logic of the assessment process, but some areas are detached in order to get greater attention. They are grouped in 5 areas:

2. Assessment planning;

Assessment should be an integral part of the work planning in the school. In order to provide relevant and in time indicators of students' learning and achievements, assessment should be integrated in the planning of different levels in the school.

3. Choice of assessment methods and creating instruments;

Assessment methods should correspond to the goal and assessment concept. They should be realised as strategies for asking questions, doing tasks etc., aiming to collect information about assessment of the learning process progress and the results achieved by students.

4. Implementation of assessment process;

Through the assessment process students should be enabled to study and show their knowledge, skill, attitudes or behaviours which are the subject of assessment. The assessment process has two basic functions: (1) to show the progress and students' achievements in the educational process and (2) to support students' learning so they can reach higher results. Assessment should start from the goals of the educational program and take into consideration the ways of teaching and learning, more specifically, the teacher should follow and value students' achievements related to each goal. Before the assessment process, the teacher is obliged to explain to the students why their achievements are tested and evaluated and how their results will be used. When the knowledge, capabilities, skill and attitudes of the students are tested, as an introduction into new educational contents, the students' results are not evaluated, but they are used for planning of teaching and learning, and that is known as diagnostic assessment. When the student's progress and learning are evaluated, his/her results are used for giving a commentary, an explanation and guidelines for further work, then we are talking about formative assessment. At the end of each unit or of a given period of time (quarter, half year, and end of the study year) the achieved results of the students are used for forming a summative grade. In our educational system, the summative assessment has a central place, and it in a way suppresses formative assessment, which should not be allowed in the new contemporary assessment system because the formative assessment should take central place. In order to change the place and role of the formative assessment, the school should build a culture and conditions for the development of the former. Learning goals should be set for each student and the process of their achieving should be followed. Evidences about student's learning should be used to give him/her concrete directions and conditions should be created for his/her further development. If the student has difficulties in solving some problems, for example: forming the Perfect tenses in German or English, the teacher should discover what is it that creates problems to his/ her students; give him/her concrete directions for further study; provide conditions for overcoming of the problems; provide working materials, collaboration with the students etc. The teacher should include the student in the setting of his/her own learning aims, and make him/her capable of following and self-evaluating of his/her achievements. After formative assessment, the teacher and the student together should set phased goals for a certain time period, for example: the students in a German or an English class should properly use modal verbs in a sentence by taking care of the place of the modal verb, of the rule for Modal verbs in German and English language, and of distinctive usage of modal verbs in Macedonian, English and German. Assessment should be realised in conditions proper to assessment and the applied method. When the evaluation is intended to improve knowledge, the school should create a climate and conditions which will encourage knowledge, and not make students feel uncomfortable, then the atmosphere will be positive and enable students to show his/her maximum achievements. The guidelines about how, when and what will be assessed should be clear, complete and appropriate to the age and capabilities of the students. For example: in a certain written text, should only the composition be assessed or grammatical rules and orthography also? So, during assessment special prepared directions should be given to the students in accordance with their capabilities. While assessment takes place, all students should be treated in the same way, which means that the school should build mechanisms for handling the unprincipled pressures from parents, students and other involved sides. The mechanisms are: informing about the standards and criteria of assessment, internal control of their application, keeping records of achievements, assessment analyses etc. The evaluation process should be appropriate to the assessment method and be implemented in accordance with the given procedures and directions. For different methods and techniques of evaluation, proper ways of grading the answers should be determined. For example: in a text with multiple choices, every true answer will be graded with one point and in the essay every aspect of it such

as composition, style, orthography etc, will be assessed with certain points according to the quality descriptions. When we talk about oral answers in which we assess the same quality of the answer, the answer of the students who express fluently should not be graded higher than the student who has problems while expressing himself/herself. That means that the teacher should not evaluate the answers with low expression quality of the students who previously showed higher knowledge while expressing themselves in writing. The students should be informed properly about the way of grading their answers during assessment of their achievements. Students should be given examples of evaluated answers and appropriate explanations why they are evaluated like that, and while assessing their achievement they should be given argumentative explanation which is clear and helps them improve their knowledge and achievement. The teacher should also enable the student to be included in the revision of the result of grading/ evaluation.

5. Grade forming;

Forming the grade which expresses the students' achievement level in a certain subject and for a certain period of time should be done according to the procedures which provide the grade to be a real presentation of the achievements and in accordance with the programme goals for the evaluated period. Forming of the grade implies resuming one or more evaluations and forming and giving valued judgment about the achievements' level.

6. Informing on the findings of the assessment;

Informing on the findings of the assessment should be done in time; it should be clear, punctual and usable to the users. Information about the achievements and other findings obtained during assessment are used to provide relevant information for all interested subjects (students, parents, and teachers) and institutions (local self-government, professional institutions, Ministry of Education and Science, and others) which reach different decisions connected with learning, classes, and promotion of assessment and education in a broad sense of the word..

7. Conclusion

In order to develop high standards of assessment, the Ministry of Education and Science wrote a key document 'Instructions for school assessment in primary schools'. This document connects two basic principles of the school assessment, standards for qualitative implementation of assessment in schools and necessary competencies of teachers which will implement assessment that comply with established standards. It represents a model for all the project activities for improving school assessment. This document concerns teachers, parents and government representatives who are responsible for the education in the country. In order to implement this document for the application of contemporary standards for evaluating students in elementary education it is necessary to train, above all, teachers in schools. This component provides teachers training for formative assessment, development of tests and instruments for assessment, use of different methods of assessment in order to improve learning, and use of results from national and international studies for students' success. Principals and the rest of the teaching staff should also attend trainings for planning and supervising of the improvement of the school assessment. These teachers and educational experts, who show competencies in the application of the new assessment approaches, should be engaged as other teachers' trainers and mentors. The teachers who are the most creative in the application of different methods and techniques should be chosen as leaders and they should work on the development of written and digital materials for learning and training, including the instruments for assessment that are used in the classroom. Also, they should work on collecting questions for tests and creating data bases for questions connected with the development of tests which will be used by the teachers.

Activities are also focused on:

- Development of public consciousness about the need for qualitative assessment, through publishing promotional materials and supplying with information for the public.
- Connecting of the school assessment with external evaluation, which is part of the Ministry of Education and Science activities.

The goal is a tendency of the society to develop a model of school assessment in Macedonia, which will be compatible with that of the European Union.

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